7: Nash E-5 (1957-1967) 1970 NV9 Tzeltal NV9
Amatenango del Valle

Chapter 11

Ordering Behavior by Places

People act out roles in a space and time matrix that provides the cues for appropriate behavior. Place is a means of patterning three structural dimensions of role: sex, age, and relative prestige. In societies characterized by multiplex relationships, Gluckman (1962:35–36n.) has emphasized the importance of the setting in establishing what role the individual is playing. One's selection of a particular role from the many possible relationships tying people together is supported by observation of official terms of address and reference in these settings. In Tzo'ontahal, the use of place as a designation of role is even more specific since each person occupying a role is given a special place within the setting.

The social domains, or fields of activity where major systems of roles are defined in Tzo'ontahal, include the house, the cabildo, the church, and the school. Segmentary role relations are limited to the clinic, the corn-grinding mill, and the store. The house has retained its importance as a ceremonial locus not only for life crisis rituals but also for initiating new officials into the civil and religious hierarchies. The institutional buildings grouped around the plaza—the church, the cabildo, the schoolhouse, the clinic, the mill, and the cooperative store—are the meeting ground for outside representatives of national or supra-local agents and townspeople. These provide the settings in which behavioral adjustments to internal changes and to external standards can be viewed.

The Concept of Space

Relevant social space is conceived of as a square. The square shape of houses, of the offering hole for the house sacrifice, of the corn field, and of the planting pattern for corn conforms to a notion of the world as a